

Examining the use of discipline reform plans to reduce disciplinary inequities in Minnesota



Nationally, research shows that exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, results in **lost instructional time** and disproportionately affects **students of color** and **students with disabilities**.

Exclusionary discipline resulted in

11 million+ days

of lost instructional time in 2015/16.¹



Exclusionary discipline is:

Used disproportionately with **Black** and **Hispanic** students and students in **special education**, especially students with **emotional and behavioral disorders**.²

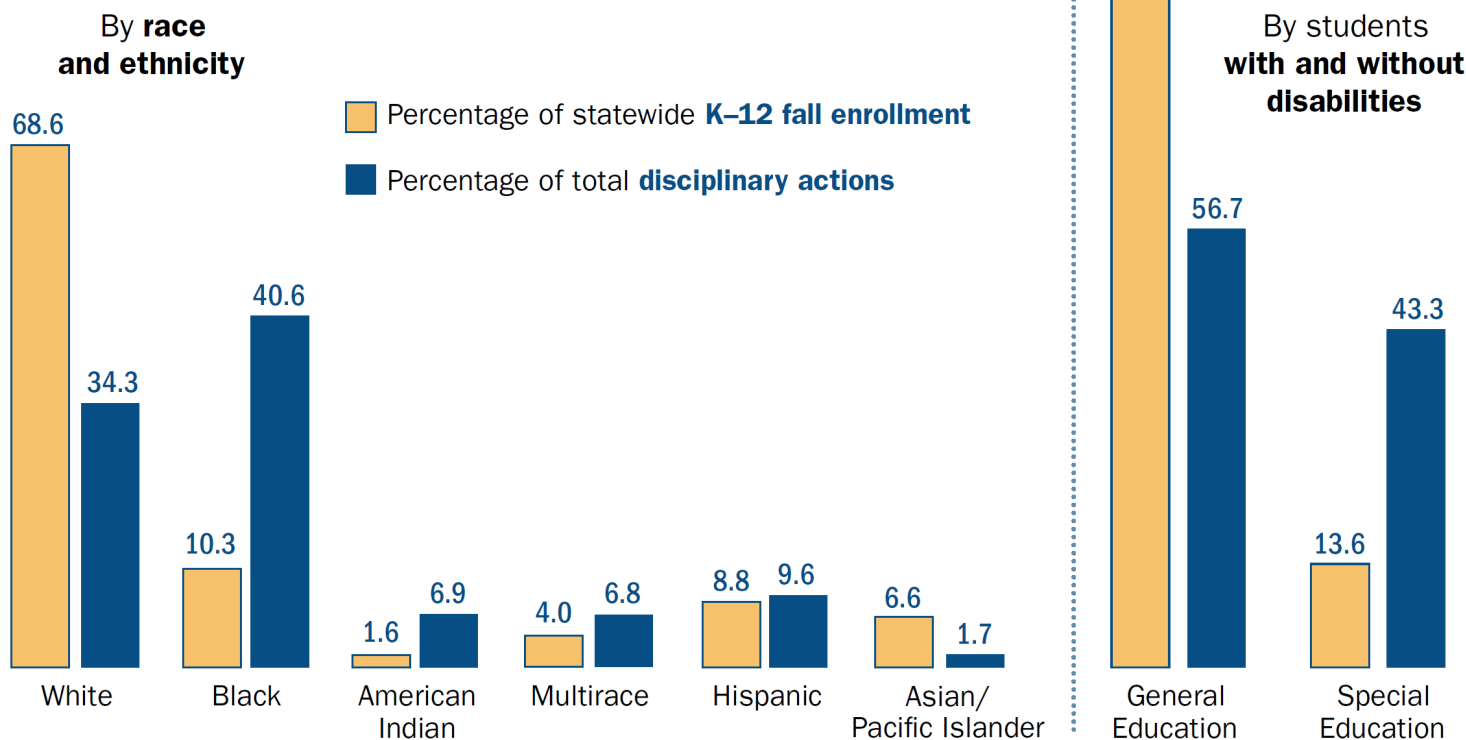


Used frequently in response to **nonviolent** behavior (such as a school uniform violation)³ or **subjective** infractions (such as disobedience).⁴



Exclusionary discipline trends in Minnesota are similar to national trends. In 2015/16, the state's **Black students, American Indian students, and students with disabilities** were more likely to experience exclusionary discipline.

Exclusionary disciplinary actions in Minnesota Public Schools (2015/16)



Note: Exclusionary disciplinary actions include out-of-school suspensions for one or more days, expulsions, and exclusions. Students were counted multiple times if multiple disciplinary actions occurred.

Source: Data from the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, 2015/16.

1 Losen & Ramirez (2020).

2 Anderson & Ritter (2017); Finn & Servoss (2014); Losen & Martinez (2013); Porowski et al. (2014).

3 Steinberg & Lacoe (2017); Watanabe (2013).

4 MDHR (2018).

Studying the use of discipline reform plans in Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Human Rights partnered with the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest to study [discipline reform plans](#) at 41 local education agencies (school districts and charter school networks) that had disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline practices.⁵

Key Findings


The study found that the number of discipline actions per student **decreased** in the 41 agencies **after one school year**, but the decrease was **not statistically significant**, after adjusting for student and agency characteristics and exclusionary discipline trends. A study of subsequent years of data may reveal more information about the influence of discipline reform plans.

Plans included a wide range of reforms.


Top five reforms in plans:

1	Implicit bias training	100%
2	Community engagement	93%
3	Relationship building	90%
4	Cultural competence	83%
5	Positive schoolwide behavioral interventions	83%

Compared with state averages, local education agencies with discipline reform plans:




Had higher average **enrollment**.




Had larger percentages of **Black** students and students who were eligible for the **national school lunch program**.


Implications for state agency and district leaders




Collect data on the level of implementation of discipline reforms to understand which reforms are effective when implemented well.



Conduct further research to study the effects of discipline reform plans on student experiences, well-being, achievement, and attendance.



Encourage the use of evidence-based discipline reforms, such as those identified by the [What Works Clearinghouse](#).



Provide more guidance to increase the consistency of discipline reform plans and to ensure they are implemented with fidelity.

View full report: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=6695>

Resources to support equitable discipline:

- REL Midwest: [Resource roundup: Equitable school discipline](#)
- What Works Clearinghouse: [Evidence-based behavioral interventions](#)
- What Works Clearinghouse: [Tips for preventing and addressing behavior problems](#)

⁵ MDHR (2018).